
RENEWAL



The Journal of the Evangelical Renewal Fellowship in New England

Walter Ciesluk, Editor

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Evangelical Renewal Fellowship is the New England Association of The Confessing Movement within the United Methodist Church

WE STILL HAVE A JOB TO DO

Rev. Dr. Thomas W. Bentum

This month The Evangelical Renewal Fellowship will have its fifth board meeting and conference since its existence. I usually present to the board a report on the state of ERF and some thoughts on where we are going. In light of our fifth anniversary, I thought I would write one with a broader appeal. Primarily I have three observations on the state of evangelicals in the New England Conference.

We are more of a network than we are a fellowship. When ERF was originally envisioned five years ago, there was the belief that evangelical clergy and laity were hungering for fellowship with one another and we just needed to organize opportunities for that to happen. There is indeed a need to get together, but it isn't that strong and that isn't all bad. The positive side of that, I have discovered, is that evangelicals from around the conference have found their own network of support both within and without the United Methodist Church. After all evangelicalism, like progressivism, is a movement across many denominations. Denominations in our nation have really become second place to the movements that are within them.

What that means for us is that our expectation "if we plan it they will come" will only lead to frustration if it is a high ideal. There is a good, strong core of people that enjoys getting together yearly at our regular meetings and at Annual Conference. It is this core of people that is the foundation of a larger network that provides connection and fellowship wherever we find ourselves around the conference. I have also discovered that our hunger for meeting together is directly proportional to the antagonism we face from conference leadership and frankly that is greatly diminished. More about that shortly.

We are more concerned with our local church than with our conference or denomination. At each Annual Conference something usually happens to stir up the evangelicals and that is usually followed by an appeal to me that ERF must do something. However, I have learned that when I try to organize whatever it is we must do, the willingness to invest time and energy to do something on a conference level evaporates as we return to our local churches. That is just the DNA of evangelicals! We love people more than policy. It is this strong focus on the local church that helped us to get into this situation. We let progressives take control of the upper leadership hoping they would leave us alone so that we could do our local work. The result, as we are aware, is the loss of institutional commitment to scriptural holiness and outright antagonism toward evangelicals. But our commitment to the local church is not all bad because as a result...

We are increasingly in significant places of influence. Although the last thing I wanted to do on a Saturday in February was drive 3 hours to a clergy session and back, I praise God for what is going on. We are finally facing the truth of numerical losses and we are changing how we do things. The bishop and other conference leaders are moving us toward putting our focus on being effective clergy and congregations. Who are the new conference leaders that are taking us down this path? Many of them are evangelicals or evangelical friendly leaders using the tools evangelicals have been using all along. Who are the effective clergy leading effective congregations? Again, many of them are evangelicals who have been investing their time mainly in their local congregation. There is still plenty of hostility

from progressives over many of the positions evangelicals hold, but because of conference wide missional changes, the doors are opening for us on increasingly higher levels. What was once our weakness to effect change is now becoming our strength.

What is ERF's role in this time of change? Certainly we need to be flexible. If we follow the statistics, our future as a church is going to go through some major upheavals. My hope is that we work ourselves out of a job as we return to our biblical roots. In the mean time there is still a need to provide the networking and fellowship that holds us together and keeps us true to our mission. There is still a need for alternative teaching that help us know how to address church and cultural issues. There is still a need to resist those who would lead our church into apostasy. We still have a job to do.

HOW IS MY PRAYER LIFE?

Robbin R. Grill

In order to lead an effective prayer life, we need to have a relationship with the One to whom we pray. As we enter this period of Lent, what better time to look at our personal relationship with God. Prayer is the vehicle through which we talk to God. Does prayer have the importance in our lives that would indicate God is number one to us? If we know God, we are in a covenant relationship with him. We are the child. He is our Father. We are His bride. He is our Groom.

There are five ways to develop an intimate relationship with God:

- 1) Spend time with our Lord, daily.
- 2) Study the Word of God.
- 3) Worship.
- 4) Repentance.
- 5) Practice the Presence of the Lord.

In our earthly lives, the way to develop a relationship with someone is to spend time with that person. Intimate relationships depend on trust. If we are open and vulnerable, if we are willing to show all of our heart – that invites intimacy. To be an intimate friend of God, we need to be able to pour out our hearts to Him, sharing the most intimate details of our lives, our hopes, and our dreams. Our hearts should long to be with God, no matter what the circumstances. To be His people, we are to love Him and be His friend first. If we have that base of intimacy we can pray effectively.

Through a daily study of God's Word, we get to know God's will, His ways and His heart. This will give us the key to know how to pray. When we understand the way He moves in the lives of His people, we can pray prayers that line up to His will. Psalm 119 tells us the rewards of studying His word. As we worship the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit we are lavishing all our attention and affections toward Him. Worship cleanses us from the "dirt" we pick up as we walk our everyday lives just living in an unsaved world. Worship time refreshes and revives us. It speaks to us about God and His power. Worship will awaken and sharpen our spirits to be attune to the will of God.

Each one of us needs to ask the Lord to search our hearts and to show us if there are any wicked ways within. The Lord is faithful to show us our motivations and secret desires. If there are wounds from hurts we have received, allow the Lord to heal those areas as we, ourselves, forgive. As we forgive, the Lord will give us forgiveness and healing. If it is hard to hear from God, we should ask Him to show us the blockages or walls in our own lives that are hindering us from receiving and giving to God. To pray effectively, we need to pray with a pure heart, not in bitterness, anger or judgment.

Finally, we need to practice just "being with God." We need to take the time to enjoy each other's company. Sometimes just sitting in silence can be a wonderful time of communion with God. Part of practicing being in the presence of God is to understand that He is with us always. That is a Biblical fact and is not based on our emotions.

As each one of us sets aside a time each day to spend with God, we will feel His blessing and our lives will be enriched. Making God #1 should be our focus.

THE WORLD OF MISSIONS REVEALED

Walter J. Ciesluk

- **Past Impressions**

When I was kid, I used to hear advertisements and testimonials from representatives and supporters of Foster Parents Plan and other similar organizations who matched people and families with children in need overseas. I always wanted to be one of those foster parents when I grew up. So from the time we were first married, my wife and I have been supporting children through Plan USA and Christian Childrens' Fund. As a consequence, I have always been keenly aware that many organizations were very active world wide attempting to help with the material and medical needs of many peoples in the third world in desperate need of these kinds of help. On the other hand, it was my impression that churches and organizations who emphasized the establishing and building of church communities in people groups which had not yet heard the gospel were mostly a things of past centuries, and that this evangelism movement had been waning up until the end of the second world war. In recent years, however, I have discovered that this is not the case at all. That Christianity has been exploding in lands once evangelized in previous times and the world evangelization movement is stronger and more active than ever. How, did I come to this revelation? Let me try to explain.

- **Recent Revelations**

It all started when I reviewed the book, "Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity" (reference 1) for the first ERF Newsletter back in December 2003. This book presented a comprehensive study of the changing face of Christianity in the world. The author claimed that over the last century, Christianity has enjoyed explosive growth in the global South - in Africa, Asia and Latin America, and that by the year 2050 only one Christian in five will be a non-Latino white person and that the center of the Christian world will have shifted firmly to the Southern Hemisphere. In the next issue of the ERF newsletter, I reviewed the book, "Jesus in Beijing, How Christianity is Transforming China and Changing the Global Balance of Power" (reference 2). In this book, the author recounts the fascinating story of how Christianity began in China, the bloody anti-Christian persecutions (especially under the Communists), the revival of an underground Christian movement led by brave men and women risking death, and the flowering of Christianity—though still under persecution—today with the result that China is actually producing missionaries to the world. The author also claims that within the next thirty years, one-third of China's population could be Christian, making China one of the largest Christian nations in the world.

The next step occurred when I was introduced to The Mission Society at several ERF Renewal conferences, and was eventually chosen to be one of the New England regional representatives. As a result, I decided I should try to become more knowledgeable about the World of Missions, and started to look for good books, web sites and other source material on this very interesting and inspiring subject. One of the first very informative source I came across was the book, "The Changing Face of World Missions, Engaging Contemporary Issues and Trends" (reference 3). This fascinating book challenges Christians, particularly evangelical Christians, to rethink what they mean by mission and how they put their commitment to spreading the gospel into practice. It provides an excellent survey and evaluation of global developments as they influence and challenge evangelical missions worldwide. Then, last November, I also had the opportunity to attend the Advancing Churches in Missions Commitment (ACMC) New England Conference as a representative of The Mission Society. The Mission Society was only 1 of 20 such organizations including a diversity of missions such as The Boston Project, Missionary Air Group, English Language Institute China, and Encountering the World of Islam, to name a few.

The conference was an eye opener for me to learn of the scope, extent, and commitment of the evangelical mission community spreading the gospel all over the world. As a consequence, I feel moved to attempt to provide a little insight into what I have learned by providing some examples of the global Christianity movement and some of the missionary activities under way. Specifically, I would like to say a few words about, the Back to Jerusalem Movement, Lausanne Committee, Evangelism in the Moslem World, and The Mission Society.

- **Back to Jerusalem Movement**

What is "Back to Jerusalem"? The BTJ vision is a passion for the house churches of China. Many feel it is God's ultimate call and destiny for the Chinese Church, the very reason they exist! BTJ refers to a call from God for the Chinese Church to preach the Gospel and establish fellowships of believers in all the countries, cities, towns, and ethnic groups between China and Jerusalem. Within those nations lay the three largest spiritual strongholds in the world today that have yet to be conquered by the Gospel: the giants of Islam, Buddhism, and Hinduism. More than 90% of the unreached people groups in the world today are located within the 10/40 window – more than 5,100 tribes and ethno-linguistic groups with little or no Gospel witness. Of the world's 50 least-Christian and least-evangelized countries, all 50 are located within this region! These countries are the focus of the Back to Jerusalem movement. There are already hundreds of Chinese missionaries working outside China in the Middle East, North Africa, Central Asia, the Indian Subcontinent, and Southeast Asia. Thousands more are in training, learning languages such as Arabic and English that will be put to use on the mission field. To learn more about the Back to Jerusalem Movement, see www.backtojerusalem.com.

- **The Lausanne Committee**

The Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization grew out of the 1974 International Congress on World Evangelization held in Lausanne, Switzerland. The gathering was called by a committee headed by Rev. Billy Graham. During the 1974 Congress, more than 2,300 evangelical leaders (from 150 countries) developed The Lausanne Covenant, a declaration that provides the theological underpinnings for intentional world evangelization. Since 1974, the Lausanne Covenant has challenged Christians to work together to make Jesus Christ known throughout the world. Also, hundreds of organizations use The Lausanne Covenant as their ministry Statement of Faith. In addition to regional, national and international consultations and conferences on evangelism, Lausanne publishes a monthly e-newsletter on evangelism, the monthly LausanneWorldPulse.com and Lausanne Occasional Papers (LOPs) – historically important documents on matters impacting global evangelism.

In 2004, the Lausanne Committee held a Forum on World Evangelization in Pattaya, Thailand whose theme was "A new vision, a new heart and a renewed call". 1530 participants from 130 countries attended the 31 simultaneous consultations of the Forum on urgent issues most relevant to world evangelization. Representatives from a wide spectrum of cultures and virtually all parts of the world came together to learn from one another and to seek new direction from the Holy Spirit for world evangelization.

The dramatic change in the political and economic landscape in recent years has raised new challenges in evangelization for the church. The polarization between east and west made it imperative that the church seek God's direction for the appropriate responses to the present challenges. In the 31 issue groups these new realities were taken into consideration, including the HIV pandemic, terrorism, globalization, the global role of media, poverty, persecution of Christians, fragmented families, political and religious nationalism, post-modern mind set, oppression of children, urbanization, neglect of the disabled and others.

Leaders who attended the recent 2004 Forum for World Evangelization in Thailand have produced more than two dozen LOPs on issues ranging from the persecuted church to bioethics. Great progress was made in these groups as they grappled for solutions to the key challenges of world evangelization. As these groups focused on making specific recommendations, larger strategic themes came to the forefront. There was affirmation that major efforts of the church must be directed toward those who have no access to the gospel. The commitment to help establish self sustaining churches within 6000 remaining unreached people groups remains a central priority. To learn more about the Lausanne covenant, forums, papers, and the work of the committee, see www.lausanne.org.

- **Evangelism in The Moslem World**

At the ACMC conference, I attended a very interesting workshop "Embracing Muslims with the Love of Christ". This workshop was led by Keith Swartley, director of the Caleb Project ministry, who has been doing outreach to the Moslem community both in the US and overseas for over 20 years. I came away wanting to know more about this fascinating and very relevant ministry and was compelled to purchase the Caleb Project Ministry book, entitled

“Encountering the World of Islam” (reference 4). Through this workshop and book, I became aware of the scope and extend and methodology of many mission organizations working to introduce the Moslem world to the gospel. To learn more, visit some of these organizations’ web sites: Arab World Ministries, www.awm.org, Caleb Project, www.calebproject.org, Christar, www.christar.org, Crescent Project, www.crescentproject.org, Frontiers, www.frontiers.org and Pioneers, www.pioneers.org.

- **The Mission Society**

The Mission Society is in the business of connecting God’s people with ministries that help fulfill their unique callings, passions, and interests. Today, an estimated 1.8 billion people have yet to hear the Gospel of Christ. In loving response to the world’s people and to Christ’s command, The Mission Society has developed ministries that address the needs of today’s world and exhibit a culture marked by people of integrity, a genuine prayer life, and obedience to the mission of bringing people to Christ. The Mission Society is called and committed to reaching others, by energizing Christian nationals, missionaries, and local churches in all parts of the world working in partnership.

The primary emphasis of The Mission Society at its inception in 1984 was to send missionaries to areas where the Gospel had been least heard, to introduce individuals to Christ, disciple new believers, plant churches, and come alongside national leaders to help them reach their own nations for Christ. This same focus continues to guide the organization more than 20 years later. Over the years, The Mission Society has grown to recruit, train, and support more than 400 cross-cultural witnesses. Currently, more than 200 work alongside nationals in more than 30 nations around the world. Serving in a wide variety of ministries, they share the love and message of Christ while helping to equip and empower national churches and their leaders, and furthering community development and relief efforts where needed.

Since its founding, The Mission Society has partnered with local churches, providing speakers and resources to aid the growth of local churches’ mission awareness and activity. Today, in addition, The Mission Society serves U.S. and international congregations by providing a variety of outreach seminars and mentoring services. As fruit of these ministries, congregations throughout the United States, parts of East and West Africa, and South America have begun actively supporting and sending their own missionaries to unevangelized and underevangelized communities within their own nations and beyond. To learn more about The Mission Society and the opportunities they provide you and your church to help spread the gospel, visit their web site at www.themissionsociety.org.

- **The Challenge to You and Your Church**

My gradual exposure to the world of missions was a revelation to me. I was surprised to learn of the tremendous commitment of the evangelical mission community in spreading the gospel all over the world. I believe that most people in our mainline churches at least in New England aren’t generally aware that these ministries exist, never mind knowing how active and effective they are. As a consequence, I am encouraging all of you to take it upon yourself to learn more and take the message back to your churches. A good place to start would be to contact The Mission Society and find out how they can help mobilize your church to participate in the vibrant world evangelism movement.

References:

1. The Next Christendom, The Coming of Global Christianity, Philip Jenkins, Oxford University Press, Copyright 2002
2. Jesus in Beijing, How Christianity Is Transforming China and Changing the Global Balance of Power, David Aikman, Former Beijing Bureau Chief, Time Magazine, Regnery Publishing, Copyright 2003
3. The Changing Face of World Missions, Engaging Contemporary Issues and Trends, Michael Pocock, Gailyn Van Rheenen, Douglas McConnell, Baker Academic, Copyright 2005
4. Encountering the World of Islam, A Ministry of the Caleb Project, Edited by Keith E.Swartley, Authentic, Copyright 2005

WHY THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT DEMANDS A CROSS

By Riley B. Case

I was traveling with a friend when we passed a roadside sign, “Repent or Perish.” My friend was unnerved. Well, actually, she was angry. “Why do they do such things; it only gives religion a bad name.” I was not necessarily in the mood for a religious discussion but I did inquire as to what she found so objectionable. “Well,” she replied, “it sounds so, so...judgmental.”

Yes, that was it. Judgmental. A vice to be avoided at all costs. A person who is judgmental is not open and accepting. It is a person who is not reflecting our new United Methodist theology, which is—thanks to some public relations firm and proclaimed through TV ads—“Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Doors.” Words like “repent” do not go with “Open Hearts.” “Repent” suggests a condemning spirit and a holier-than-thou attitude. It is a “bad” word. When combined with the word “perish” the badness is multiplied.

How dare people go around telling other people to repent!

“How dare they?” would be a good question to ask Jesus directly, if we could. “Repent or perish” is, after all, taken from the words of Jesus, “I tell you; unless you repent you will all likewise perish” (Luke 13:3). And, if we had the chance, while we were at it, we might ask Jesus about some other things he said, like about the branches that don’t bear fruit that are thrown into the fire and burned, or the unfaithful servant who was thrown into the outer darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. Our comments to Jesus might go something like this: “Jesus, these things you say about eternal punishment and fire are harsh words; we thought you were kind and loving and accepting. You hold children on your lap and send away those who would stone the woman taken in adultery.”

Those who hold to the historic faith have no problems with the words of Jesus. Sin is real. Judgment is real. Hell is real. God’s love is real. The Incarnation is real. The cross as an act of atonement is real. Repentance is real. Faith is real. Grace is real. Transformation and a new creation are real. Heaven is real. The message to be shared with all people is that “God so loved the world that he gave his only son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have everlasting life.”

But some, mostly outside the church but some even connected with the church, have “progressed” beyond that. They call themselves “progressive” Christians. They have new insights about God and the faith that they wish to impose upon the rest of us. The essence of religion, according to the progressives, is not about bloody crosses and salvation from hell but about acceptance and celebrating differences. God affirms us as we are, whatever our gender or race or economic status or lifestyle or religion. The “good news” we so often talk about is not that Christ died on the cross for our sins, but, as the United Methodist confirmation materials once stated, “we are all children of God by birth.”

“Progressive” Christians don’t particularly care for the God of the Old Testament, or the apostle Paul, who said unkind things about homosexuality. They are exclusively attracted to certain words and actions of Jesus. After all, Jesus lifted up the woman taken in adultery; Jesus said, “Let little children come to me”; Jesus accepted the Gentiles; Jesus had a preference for the poor; Jesus did not say anything about homosexuality; Jesus would not go to war in Iraq; Jesus was against intolerant religious leaders. Jesus told us, “Judge not, that you be not judged.”

“Judge not, that you be not judged” is the new John 3:16 of the progressive Christians. If progressive Christians put a Bible verse on a placard and held it up for the sake of TV cameras at a major league baseball game (not that progressive Christians would ever put a Bible verse on a placard—but if they did) the Bible verse would not be John 3:16, but Matthew 7:1, “Judge not....” If progressive Christians were ever to pass out tracts on the street (not that progressive Christians would ever pass out tracts on the street—but if they did) they would not feature John 3:16 but Matthew 7:1 “Judge not...”

In the new religion of inclusiveness and diversity, acceptance of different cultures, lifestyles, and systems of morality is required. From the progressive Christian perspective John the Baptist probably never said, “Repent, for the kingdom

of heaven is at hand,” but rather, “Judge not, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” (It might be worth mentioning that people do not lose their heads for preaching, “Judge not.”)

It is appropriate to point out that Matthew 7:1 (“judge not...”), when put into the context of the Sermon on the Mount, means something quite different from what the progressives want it to mean. The progressives want the verse to mean that since we are all children of God by birth and are all accepted by God as good—just as we are without change—we ought not judge other people.

Our bishops have said that unrepentant, practicing homosexuality is not a barrier to church membership. If this is not a barrier, then nothing is a barrier. There are no standards. The vows mean whatever we want them to mean. Our membership, as one interpreter actually argued, is “unambiguously permissive in nature and inclusive in scope.” We all do what is right in our own eyes.

But the Sermon on the Mount is hardly a passage celebrating diversity. Jesus’ message is not an “Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Doors” sort of message. There is a text saying if our hand causes us to sin, we had better cut it off than be thrown in hell; there is a passage about a wide gate that leads to destruction; about Jesus saying to people, “I never knew you; depart from me, you evildoers.” Indeed, Jesus tells us we must be perfect even as our father in heaven is perfect. The reason we are not to judge is that we are all guilty. It is not that we are all acceptable to God. It is the exact opposite: none of us is acceptable to God.

In other words, the Sermon on the Mount demands a cross. We need forgiveness and transformation and grace. The Christian message is that because of Christ’s death on the cross, it is possible for us to be reconciled to God by faith.

The invitation to the gospel is indeed inclusive. As the hymn states: “Come, sinners, to the gospel feast, let every soul be Jesus’ guest.” All persons are of sacred worth. That is precisely why Jesus Christ died for all persons. All persons shall be eligible to attend the services of the United Methodist Church (Article IV, Constitution of the United Methodist Church). When that Constitutional amendment was being discussed by the General Conferences and then in the annual conferences, there was no dissent. We all agreed. In one respect the statement does not go far enough: it is not just that all persons are eligible; we plead earnestly with all persons to come not only to our worship services, but to the cross. God is not willing that any should perish.

It is a bad reading to claim that “inclusiveness” is the bedrock foundation of United Methodism. In Wesley’s mind the “new creation” in Christ is the bedrock foundation of Methodism. When the first group of preachers gathered with Bishop Francis Asbury in Baltimore in 1784, to form the Methodist Episcopal Church in America, they declared as their purpose to “save souls.” They wrote into the first Discipline, “How shall we prevent improper persons from insinuating into the society?” They feared a dead, formal, and unconverted membership. To be a Methodist was supposed to mean something. It was to represent Christ in the world, that the world might be redeemed.

What about judging? We are not to judge, if that means assuming some moral superiority. But there is a place for speaking out to hold each other accountable. Bishop William Willimon explains in his commentary on Titus (p. 2176, *Spiritual Formation Bible*):

“Who am I to judge you? Your brother or sister in Christ, that’s who. The Letter to Titus suffers no reservations in making specific moral demands upon these new Christians. The world is quite right in assuming that if the way of Christ is true and life-giving, it ought to be able to look at our lives and see that way personified in what we do and say.”

Riley B. Case is a contributing editor and member of the Good News Board of Directors. He is the author of *Evangelical and Methodist: A Popular History* (Abingdon Press, 2004).

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RENEWAL 2007 CONFERENCE PREVIEW

On March 24, 2007, Evangelical Renewal Fellowship will hold its 5th annual conference. The **RENEWAL 2007** Conference is being planned and will be hosted by the Exeter United Methodist Church, Exeter, New Hampshire. The theme of the conference will be "*Sanctified Sexuality*", and the keynote speaker will be **Rev. Karen Booth, Transforming Congregations**.

During her presentation, Rev. Booth will be laying the Biblical groundwork for an understanding of human sexuality. What is God's created intent? How has that been distorted by sin? How do Jesus and the Holy Spirit bring about healing and transformation? What is sanctified sexuality (1 Corinthians 6 and 1 Thessalonians 4) and why does it matter? The second half of her presentation will focus on some practical ways a local church can respond to the sexually confused, broken, and sinful through Biblical instruction, compassionate outreach, and prophetic witness.

Rev. Karen Booth, who received her Master of Divinity from Drew Theological School, is an Ordained Elder in the Peninsula-Delaware Annual Conference and has pastored United Methodist Churches in Delaware and Maryland. She is currently the Executive Director, Transforming Congregations, Millsboro DE. Transforming Congregations is an approved ecumenical ministry of the Peninsula-Delaware Annual Conference and a member ministry of Exodus International. Transforming Congregations educates and equips local churches and clergy/lay leadership for ministry to the sexually broken and sinful, especially in the areas of same-sex attraction and gender confusion. This work includes maintaining a website, publishing a bi-annual journal, leading workshops and speaking at local churches and various other gatherings. More information about the ministry is available at <http://www.transformingcong.org>. Rev. Booth is a member of steering committees of UMAction and RENEW Network for Women. She is also a member of Association for Church Renewal, a coalition of mainline renewal leaders.

At the breakfast meeting, **Rev. Walter Fenton, Good News Director of Networking and Development**, will be speaking on what United Methodist evangelicals are doing around the country and how we might be more effective in New England. The title of his presentation will be "*Wise as Serpents, Gentle as Doves*." He will offer some practical ways orthodox-evangelicals can work for renewal and reform in their annual conferences. He will particularly focus on strategic methods for electing delegates to the 2008 General and Jurisdictional Conferences and on preparing and presenting a positive legislative agenda at annual conference. As well as his important role in Good News, Rev. Fenton is an Elder in the Greater New Jersey Annual Conference, and currently associate pastor at Princeton UMC. He is a graduate of Yale Divinity School.

UPPER ROOM LIVING PRAYER CENTER

At Conference each year a time is set aside to answer phones as a part of the Upper Room Living Prayer Center. This year we will be answering the phone on Friday and Saturday afternoons from 1:00 p.m. until 5:00 p.m.

WE NEED VOLUNTEERS

How does this work? The Upper Room Living Prayer Center is a 24-hour, 7 day a week intercessory prayer ministry staffed by Christian volunteers. A volunteer answers the phone, hears the prayer request, prays with the caller and the request is forwarded to one of 300 Covenant Prayer Groups who will pray for the caller and his/her request for 30 days. As a volunteer, you will be answering the phone, noting the prayer request, and praying with the caller. If you have never done this, it is a powerful ministry. Pastor Bill Hartford will have sign-up forms at the Renewal 07 Conference or you can contact: Robbin R. Grill, 143 High Street, Boscawen, NH 03303-2807, Telephone: (603)796-2661, E-mail: robbin@rrgcpa.com

RECENT BOOKS ON CHRISTIANITY AND RENEWAL

Letters to a Young Evangelical, Tony Campolo, Basic Books, Copyright 2006

Named by Christianity Today as one of the twenty five most influential preachers of the last fifty years, best-selling author Tony Campolo has spent decades calling on readers and audiences around the world to live their faith through committed activism. A tireless crusader for human rights and the eradication of world poverty, Campolo is a "Red Letter" Christian--he reminds us that when Jesus spoke, he spoke of social justice. But the Religious Right and social conservatives have hijacked His message in the name of Republican politics. They have corrupted the faith by ignoring the true message of Christ and focusing instead on narrow "wedge" issues to win political campaigns. In *Letters to a Young Evangelical*, Campolo calls on evangelicals of all ages to reject the false pieties of the Religious Right. With his trademark candor and wit, he offers sage advice to seekers who are trying to live their faith in a modern world that is politically polarized and predominantly secular. He is unafraid to touch on the hot-button topics that divide believers in America and around the world: abortion, gay rights, war, capital punishment, feminism, and the environment. An activist, a visionary, and a man of deep faith, Tony Campolo offers guidance not only for young evangelicals, but for seekers of all ages and faiths.

The New Faces of Christianity, Believing the Bible in the Global South, Philip Jenkins, Oxford University Press, Copyright 2006

"In this book, Philip Jenkins takes a close look at Christianity in the global South, revealing what it is like, and what it means for the future." "The faith of the South, Jenkins finds, is first and foremost a biblical faith. Indeed, in the global South, many Christians identify powerfully with the world portrayed in the New Testament - an agricultural world very much like their own, marked by famine and plague, poverty and exile, until very recently a society of peasants, farmers, and small craftsmen. In the global South, as in the biblical world, belief in spirits and witchcraft are commonplace, and in many places - such as Nigeria, Indonesia, and Sudan - Christians are persecuted just as early Christians were. Thus the Bible speaks to the global South with a vividness and authenticity simply not available to most believers in the industrialized North." More important, Jenkins shows that throughout the global South, believers are reading the Bible with fresh eyes, and coming away with new and sometimes startling interpretations.

Staying the Course, Supporting the Church's Position on Homosexuality, Edited by Maxie D. Dunnam and H. Newton Malony, Abingdon Press, Copyright 2003

The controversy concerning homosexuality and the church has been so rancorous that it is easy to consider it simply a shouting match, or tug-of-war for power. Yet behind the different points in the debate are principled convictions, arising from deeply held theological beliefs. Serious issues are at stake, involving the substance of the gospel itself. The contributors to this volume are drawn from those who affirm the church's traditional position regarding homosexuality. They have written in order to articulate and deepen the convictions of those who believe that homosexual practice is incompatible with Christian teaching. They see themselves as true to the ancient tradition of the Christian faith in their inclination to offer the transforming power of God for dealing with the brokenness of the world. While affirming a strong understanding of the goodness of creation, they are clear in acknowledging the flawed and fallen character of humanity. They believe that Christians should be about the business of offering redemption from evil, rather than accepting or blessing it. Insisting that gays and lesbians are persons of sacred worth, and recognizing that homosexual practice is only one of many sinful human choices, they do not shy away from the contention that Scripture and Christian tradition reject homosexuality as a viable Christian lifestyle.

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Purpose Statement

Confessing Jesus Christ as Son, Savior, and Lord, the Confessing Movement exists to enable the United Methodist Church to retrieve its classical doctrinal identity, and to live it out as disciples of Jesus Christ

ERF Executive Team (1 July 2005-30 June 2007)

Executive Coordinator: **Pastor Tom Bentum**

Communications Coordinator: **Walter Ciesluk**

Conference Relations Coordinator: **Pastor Michael Pike**

Legislative Action Coordinator: **Pastor Brian Wood**

Membership Secretary: **Tammy Souza**

Prayer Coordinator: **Robbin Grill**

Recording Secretary: **Pastor Richard Pagano**

Regional Events Coordinator: **Pastor Dan Weaver**

RENEWAL Conference Director: **Pastor Tom Bentum**

Target Group Coordinator: **Pastor Brian Souza**

Treasurer: **Pastor Lloyd Leeman**